

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator CLELAND be allowed to be in order as the Democrat to speak after I speak for up to 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. KERREY addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska is recognized.

READING SCORES

Mr. KERREY. Mr. President, I am here to take a couple of minutes to point out a success story that appeared in the Lincoln Journal Star.

I ask unanimous consent that this article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the article was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Lincoln Journal Star, June 23, 1999]

READING SCORES RISE AGAIN

(By Joanne Young)

Right before his eyes, Steven Hladik saw his daughter's life change.

"She's just happy. She went from being a sad little girl to totally loving life," Hladik said of his third youngest child, Nikyle, 6.

He attributes the change to Reading Recovery, one program Lincoln Public Schools has used to improve first-graders' reading skills. A dramatic decline over 15 years in reading scores of elementary- and middle-school students prompted LPS to focus on bringing those scores up.

Metropolitan Achievement Test reading scores are up for the second straight year for grades 2-8, according to a report to the Lincoln Board of Education. This snapshot of 1999 achievement showed that since 1997, second-graders have improved 16 percent. Third-graders are up 12 percent, fourth- and fifth-graders up 8 percent. Only ninth-grade scores have held about the same.

Math scores, which had declined along with reading scores, are up in all grades, with six of eight grades working at 70 percent or better of their peers nationwide.

LPS Associate Superintendent Marilyn Moore delivered the good news Tuesday at a school board meeting.

Board member Shirley Doan said the improvements came because of commitment by teachers, principals and students.

"I think we have giants standing on the shoulders of giants here," Doan said. "Can we do it again? It would be very unusual, but I think we can."

About the same number of students were tested in 1998 and 1999. More special education and English as a Second Language students were given accommodations this year, such as more test time and help with instructions. But a second analysis of '98 and '99 scores that excluded all special education and ESL students verified that scores improved, Moore said.

Leslie Lukin, LPS assessment specialist, pointed to several reasons for the reading improvement: Teachers have changed the way they teach reading in kindergarten through third grade, with different teaching plans for each grade. They also are familiarizing students with the format and type of questions on the achievement tests.

But Reading Recovery may have produced the most dramatic results.

Aimed at the 20 percent of first graders having the hardest time learning to read, the program offers one-on-one help with letters, sounds, sentence structure and reading methods. Kids spend half an hour a day with Reading Recovery teachers and special books. Then they read at home with parents.

Jeanette Tiwarid, the LPS Reading Recovery teacher leader said Reading Recovery builds on children's strengths—what they already know—to accelerate their learning and improve their confidence.

The number of children in the program have gone up as more teachers have taken the rigorous Reading Recovery training and more schools have added the curriculum. In the 1994 school year, 78 children passed through the full program. Last year, the number jumped to 527.

Questionnaires from parents of this year's Reading Recovery students sang the praises of the program. Their children were much more confident, they said, far happier after catching up with their schoolmates in reading.

For Nikyle, it was a godsend.

She had changed schools three times in kindergarten, just as she was starting to learn, because her mom and dad were splitting up, her dad said. She started first grade at McPhee Elementary and then when her father got custody of her and three brothers and sisters, she moved to Calvert Elementary.

All the while, because of everything going on in his own life, Steven, Hladik didn't realize the effect on Nikyle. She was being in learning, and she was miserable.

"She hated to go to school. It was hard to get her up and make her go," her father said. "She was insecure and really quite."

Now she loves school. And her confidence has soared.

Not only has her reading improved so have her math and other subjects, her friendships, her self-esteem.

She's making sure what happened to her doesn't happen to her 4-year-old sister, Stephanie.

"Every night she sits and reads books to her," her father said.

Mr. KERREY. Mr. President, this is about the success of a Federally funded program that was implemented by heroic people in Lincoln, NE—they include principals, schoolteachers, and the Lincoln school board. I am talking about Title I. One of the reasons I talk about it a great deal is that, in Nebraska, there are 17,000 students that are eligible for Title I, but because we don't appropriate enough money, they are not funded. They don't get the benefits of this kind of effort.

What this article talks about is a program called Reading Recovery that has been implemented in the Lincoln public school system over the last 3 years—and it's a very rigorous program. The teachers had to train themselves; they had to make a commitment to acquire the skills necessary to implement this program. The article starts off with a parent talking about the exhilaration of seeing his daughter learn how to read and make progress—be successful, in other words. What they have done is quite remarkable. It needs to be observed because citizens need to know that success indeed is possible.

Second graders have improved their reading scores 16 percent; third graders, 12 percent; fourth and fifth graders are up 8 percent. These are dramatic increases. They have achieved the increases by starting at a very early age, using Title I moneys, using this Reading Recovery program, and going after young people who are at risk, who are falling behind, who have come into the school system without these reading skills.

They have said if you want to lift the overall test scores, quite correctly, you have to help those who are most likely to fail if we don't intervene. That is what Title I is. It is not the Federal Government telling these local schools what to do. We recently passed an Ed-Flex bill that provided increased flexibility. I support that. But unless we provide resources, it is impossible for local heroes to take the money and make something of it.

I will point out, in addition to the necessity of an early effort, an additional challenge we face. It's explained in one little paragraph here. Those of us born in 1943 sort of remember schools in the 1950s and 1960s and think, gee, why can't we do it the way we did it? Things have changed. In this article, one little paragraph says the following about this young girl who was given the benefit of this program:

She had changed schools three times in kindergarten, just as she was starting to learn, because her mom and dad were splitting up, her dad said.

She ended up caught in the middle of a custody battle, a transfer occurred, and as a consequence of the transfer, she fell behind. That is what happened. What Title I enabled her to do was catch up. It is quite a miraculous thing that happened as a consequence, as I said, of significant local commitment and the help of teachers who trained themselves and a principal who was committed. One of the principals is Deann Currin at Elliott Elementary. The Lincoln school board supported Reading Recovery. They used title I money. Again, it is not the Federal Government telling them what to do, but providing them the resources.

I regret to say that in Nebraska, there are 17,000 children eligible for Title I programs that simply are not able to benefit because we are not providing a sufficient amount of resources. I yield the floor.

Mr. WELLSTONE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota is recognized.

CHILDREN AND EDUCATION

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, first of all, I thank Senator KERREY for talking about children and education. It is truly a good news/bad news story. The good news is we have heroes and heroines right in our own communities